



The cacophony of courage: Discerning the right stuff

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CENTER FOR
CHARACTER &
CITIZENSHIP

University of Missouri-St. Louis—College of Education



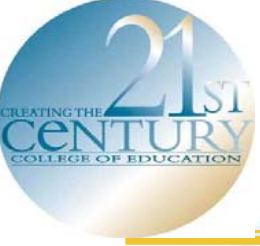
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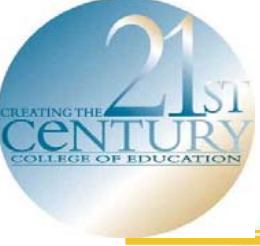
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In the word of Monty
Python....

"And now for something
completely different"



Something completely different:

- Welcome to Amateur Hour
 - I am not a hero
 - I am not a philosopher
- No answers here
 - I am not going to provide answers
 - I am going to raise questions
- My goals are to get you to question
 - What courage really is
 - And whether courage is really intrinsically good



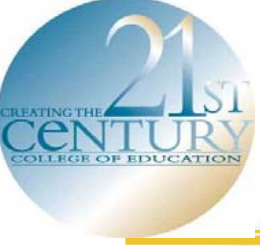
I want you to meet a
courageous person...

I may be a little angel, but I don't have wings



The Visual Cliff

- Pre-crawling infants show different physiological reaction to cliff
- Crawling infants show fear of cliff
- With more crawling experience, more fear
- Mother's expression and enticement increase crossing of cliff



I want you to meet two more
courageous people...

Why must I be a teenager in love?

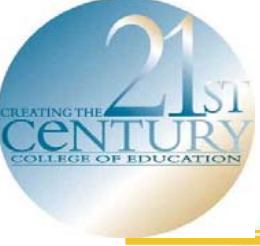


Adolescent Identity and Intimacy

- Identity - Adolescent psycho-social project to understand and construct one's self
- Intimacy - Early adulthood psycho-social project to share oneself with another in a loving relationship

"The strength acquired at any stage is tested by the necessity to transcend it in such a way that the individual can take chances in the next stage with what was most vulnerably precious in the previous one"

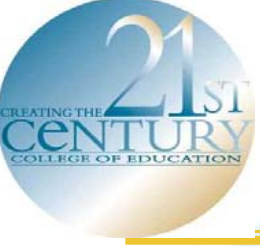
Erik Erikson *Childhood and Society*



Let's meet one last
courageous person...

The Teacher





"The Courage to Teach"

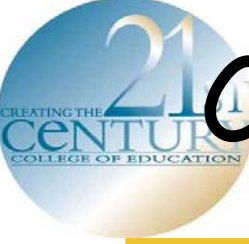
Parker Palmer

- Effective teaching requires being authentic
- It takes courage to be authentically present in a classroom
- Students are watching and judging you
- Public speaking is one of the greatest human fears



Defining Courage

CREATING THE
CENTURY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

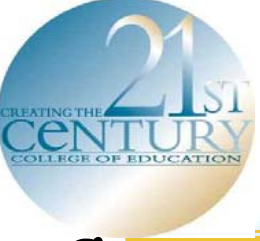


Courage is more than action

"Virtue is ...concerned with emotions and actions"

Aristotle

Nichomachean Ethics



Courage "has an inner life as well as an outer one. [It] is composed of not just observable acts but also the cognitions, emotions, motivations, and decisions that bring them about"

Peterson & Seligman
Character Strengths and Virtues

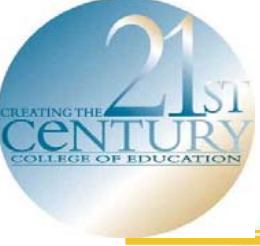
"The courageous man is dauntless as a human being. Hence he will fear what is fearful; but he will endure it in the right way and as reason directs for the sake of acting nobly...He is courageous who endures and fears the right things, for the right motive, in the right manner, and at the right time."

Aristotle - *The Nichomachean Ethics*



"The only thing we have to fear,
is fear itself. Nameless,
unreasoning, unjustified terror,
which paralyzes needed effort
to convert retreat into
advance"

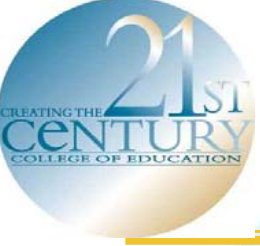
Franklin Delano Roosevelt



Types of Courage

David Putnam (1997)

- **Physical** - overcoming fear of physical harm to oneself
- **Moral** - maintaining ethical integrity in the face of negative consequences to oneself
- **Psychological** - Facing and overcoming one's inner demons



Moral vs Physical Courage

- Physical courage: Medal of Honor winners
- Moral courage: Whistle blowers (Hugh Thompson)

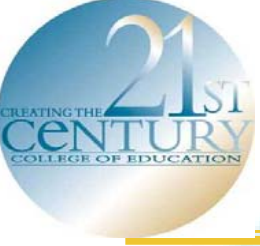
"It is curious that physical courage should be so common and moral courage so rare"

Mark Twain

Component Virtues of Courage

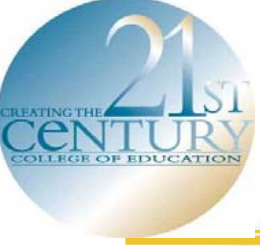
Peterson and Seligman

- **Bravery** or valor: "the ability to do what needs to be done despite fear"
- **Persistence**, perseverance, industriousness: "The mustering of will to perform in face of contrary impulses"
- **Integrity**, authenticity, honesty: "The genuine presentation of oneself to others...as well as the internal sense that one is a morally coherent being"
- **Vitality**, enthusiasm, vigor: "Feeling alive, being full of zest, and displaying enthusiasm for any and all activities"



The Qualities of Courage

- Prudence: Appropriate fear
- Enduring the fear
- Persevering in the face of fear
- Moral motivation: Doing so for noble reasons
- Doing the right thing: Acting morally



Appropriate Fear

Not phobias or cowardice or masochism.

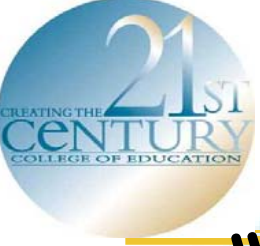
"Courage is the mastery of fear, not the absence of fear" Mark Twain

"Courage is doing what you're afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you are scared" Eddie Rickenbacker

Enduring Fear and Persevering

How WWII rescuers overcame fear
(Fogelman: *Conscience and Courage*)

- Focus on action as distraction
- Social support and encouragement
- Turning to God: Spiritual transcendence
- Hatred for the Nazis
- Adolescent strength and naivete



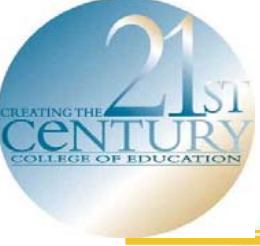
"All men are frightened. The more intelligent they are, the more they are frightened. The courageous man is the man who forces himself, in spite of his fear, to carry on"

General George S. Patton, Jr.

"Young people often ignore danger,
either through a deliberate, if
unconscious, misjudgment of its
seriousness or by making light of
it or by denying the potential of
evil forces in authority to hurt
them"

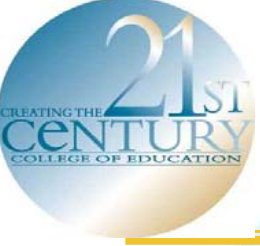
Eva Fogelman

*Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of
Jews During the Holocaust*



For the Right Reasons

- Moral motivations
- Having the wisdom to discern just causes

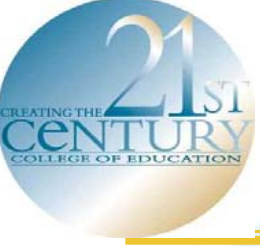


Doing the Right Thing

"To see what is right and not to do it is cowardice"

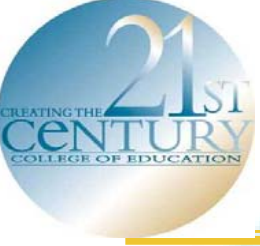
Confucius

The moral challenge of the toleration clause



Courage and Character

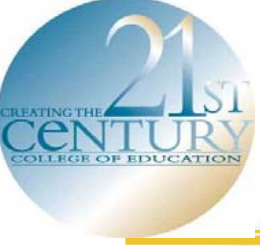
Courage is part of character; it is one virtue among many. Depending on how one defines it, it may be a moral virtue or simply a derivative good.



Knowledge and courage take turns at greatness...Without courage, wisdom bears no fruit.

Baltasar Gracian

The Art of Worldly Wisdom



Root of Courage

- Temperament (timidity vs. fearlessness)
- Eriksonian trust (vs. mistrust)
- Parental modeling
- Moral identity; purpose

The Complexity of Courage

- 9/11 terrorists
- The masochist enduring suffering out of enjoyment of pain
- Fearless daredevils
 - Eric Register's friend who went outback snowboarding alone
- The 7 month old baby crossing the visual cliff
- The one-time hero; person who is usually not brave but acts courageously in one extreme circumstance
- Neurotic who pushes against fears
- The whistle blower who believes all will embrace her action and instead is vilified
- The 15 year old girl who asks a popular boy on a date
- The Cowardly Lion (Wizard of Oz)

Dedicated to the memory of Major Hugh Thompson



Q: Do you feel it took courage to refuse to fight the war in the first place?

Hugh Thompson: Yes, in retrospect, I think it took a lot of courage. According to history today, we shouldn't have been there. So going against the norm, I guess, would demand a whole lot of courage